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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 004224

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [I2](#)

SUBJECT: STRAGGLERS BEWARE: ELECTION REGISTRATION DEADLINE
APPROACHING FAST

REF: BAGHDAD 3975

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert S. Ford for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Procrastinators will have less than a week to make sure they are on the ballot during December 15 elections. The September 30 registration deadline for parties and individuals has come and gone, and only one more week (deadline: October 21) remains for registered parties to name their candidates and if so-inspired, form coalitions. Sixty-three individuals, 264 parties, and one coalition have already registered under the September 30 deadline, an overall 50 percent increase over last January's elections. There are two main concerns. First there is no sense as to whether these parties will be able to solidify candidate lists in time for the deadline and second, there exists no strong mechanism to screen candidates. END SUMMARY.

MAJOR WEAKNESS IN REGISTRATION VERIFICATION

2. (U) Party entities/coalitions must fulfill several requirements to participate in the December elections. Chief among these requirements is a list of 500 signatures supporting the entity, a monetary deposit, non-refundable if 50 percent or more of the votes needed to win a seat is not obtained, and a signed statement affirming that the party/entity has no affiliation with armed forces, or otherwise has no unsavory past dealings, for example with Saddam's regime. This signed statement also includes an affirmation of other routine requirements, for example that the candidate is over a certain age, a high school degree holder, and so on.

3. (C) On October 12, Mauricio Claudio, IFES representative and operational specialist in charge of party registration, told PolOff that the ability to verify these signed statements is almost non-existent. Claudio cited poor record keeping, limited resources, and a short time frame for investigations as the main reasons. However, he especially cited the lack of some sort of adequate database to cross check candidate names. When asked how the national and international community could be certain that individuals with a criminal past were not elected, Claudio did not have a specific answer. He did mention that the incentive for candidates in the same or other parties would be to "rat-out" a prospective candidate as a way to disqualify him or her. PolOff expressed her concern, and will continue to follow-up on this important theme.

NO BUDGING ON DEADLINE?

4. (C) On October 9, UN/EAD Carina Pirelli had reinforced the October 21 candidate list/coalition deadline. Pirelli said that this deadline was a hard deadline because the IECI needed 7 weeks to go through the motions of printing, producing, and distributing ballots and polling materials. During PolOff's October 12 meeting, Claudio emphasized this same point. However, when PolOff pushed for more information on how the ballots would appear when printed, Claudio admitted that only the party and party coalitions information would be printed on the ballot. The actual candidate lists would, he said, would be printed 7 days before and posted at the polling centers. Therefore, there will be up to 6 weeks to vet candidates. Presumably, there will be some candidates disqualified after October 21 for various reasons, and these names must be replaced by other names.

INCENTIVE TO REGISTER IN ALL PROVINCES?

5. (C) Forty-five compensatory seats out of 270 will be allocated to "on-the-margin" political entities

(ref). Although regulations for how this compensatory system will work are not yet finalized, one scenario would be to allocate seats to political entities that do not obtain a majority in a particular governorate, but obtain a significant number of votes country-wide.

16. (C) Claudio said that the October 21 deadline was also the deadline for parties and coalitions to decide in which provinces they would offer up candidates, and which candidates would run where. He said that some parties or coalitions could decide to run in all provinces or just a few. PolOff asked him whether the parties' and coalitions' incentive would be to place candidates in all governorates given the compensatory seats provision. He affirmed that this could indeed be the incentive. He cautioned that regulations detailing the compensatory seat system had not yet been put in place.

COMMENT

17. (C) Post will follow up with the IECI on the following issues: (a) improving the ability at an operational level to vet candidates; (b) flexibility on the October 21 deadline for candidate lists that would not affect readiness to hold elections December 15 (c) the need to finalize regulations for compensatory seats.
Khalilzad